

## ARNOLD ARBORETUM

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

BULLETIN  
OF  
POPULAR INFORMATION

JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS.

MAY 14, 1917

**Eastern Asiatic Cherries.** During the last few years the Arboretum has been engaged in studying the Cherry-trees of eastern Asia, and has assembled a large collection of these plants, including most of the species and all the forms with double and otherwise abnormal flowers which are popular garden plants in Japan where the flowering of these trees is celebrated by national rejoicings. All the world has heard of the Japanese Cherry-blossoms, and travellers in the East usually so arrange their journeys that they can be in Tokyo when the white flowers of fifty thousand trees of the Yoshino-zakura (*Prunus yedoensis*) make a day of thanksgiving, and the great trees in the long avenue of Cherry-trees (*P. serrulata*) at Koganei are covered with their rose-colored flowers. Well known to travellers, too, are the avenues of Cherry-trees at Arashi-yama near Kyoto and at Yoshino near Nara. The Cherry-trees which mean so much to the Japanese and delight all foreigners who visit Japan in early spring are perfectly hardy, and easy to grow here in New England; and it is unfortunate that there is no hillside in the Arboretum which can be covered with these trees or no space where a long avenue of them can be planted, for the flowering of a great number of these trees might become as great a joy to the people of Boston as they are in Japan. Such collections of Cherry-trees might well form a part of the equipment for pleasure and instruction in all the northern cities of the country, but up to this time only Rochester, New York, is arranging to make a plantation of these trees to cover many acres of rolling hills in its great park on the shores of Lake Ontario. In the Arboretum only room for a few

isolated individuals has been found, but most of the species are now established here and some of them have bloomed for several years. This year the trees promise to produce an unusually large crop of flowers and a visit to them will be well repaid.

**Prunus concinna.** This little Cherry, which was discovered by Wilson on the mountains of central China at altitudes above the sea of from twelve to fifteen hundred feet, is the first Cherry to bloom in the Arboretum this year. In its native forests it is a shrub five or six feet tall, but here it is treelike in habit, although only three or four feet high, with a straight stem, and is now as thickly covered with flowers as it is possible for a plant to be covered. The flowers, which appear before the leaves, are in few-flowered clusters and are white with a wine-colored calyx. The red, lustrous, loose bark of the stem of this Cherry is attractive but as a flowering plant it is less valuable than the Japanese *Prunus subhirtella*, under which name it was once distributed by a London nurseryman. *Prunus concinna* can be seen in the collection of Chinese shrubs on the southern slope of Bussey Hill.

**Prunus tomentosa.** Until this year the earliest of the Cherries to bloom in the Arboretum, *Prunus tomentosa* is a native of China and a shrub only five or six feet high, and when fully grown in abundant space for the spread of its branches often broader than tall. The flowers open from pink buds as the leaves begin to unfold, and the bright red stalks and calyx make a handsome contrast with the white petals. The small fruit ripens in June and is scarlet, covered with short hairs, and is sweet and of good flavor. This shrub is very hardy and flourishes and produces its fruit in dry cold regions like Alberta and the Dakotas, and in such regions it is possible it may develop into an important fruit-producing plant. *Prunus tomentosa* is a native of northern China and was raised in the Arboretum twenty-five years ago from seed sent here from Peking. A form discovered in western China by Wilson (var. *endotricha*) is also established in the Arboretum. This blooms rather later than the northern plant and the fruit is destitute or nearly destitute of hairs. The white-flowered form much cultivated in Tokyo is not in the Arboretum collection.

**Prunus subhirtella.** This is the Japanese Spring Cherry which Mr. Wilson, after a year devoted in Japan to the study of Cherry-trees, calls "the most floriferous and perhaps the most delightful of all Japanese Cherries." It is a large, low-branched shrub rather than a tree and is not known as a wild plant. This Cherry is much planted in western Japan from northern Hondo southward, but it is not much grown in the eastern part of the Empire and is rarely found in Tokyo gardens. For this reason and as it does not reproduce itself from seed *Prunus subhirtella* is still rare in American and European collections. There are large plants in the Arboretum collection where they have been growing since 1894 and where, covered with their drooping pink flowers, they are objects of wonderful beauty. The value of *Prunus*



*subhirtella* is increased by the fact that the flowers often remain in good condition for ten or twelve days, and longer than those of the other single-flowered Cherry-trees. This Cherry can be raised from soft wood cuttings and by grafting on its own seedlings. These will grow into tall trees with long straight trunks (*Prunus subhirtella*, var. *ascendens*) and in Japanese temple gardens are sometimes fifty feet high with trunks two feet in diameter. This is a common tree in the forests of central Japan, and grows also in southern Korea and central China. Until Wilson's investigations in Japan in 1914 this tree seems to have been entirely unknown in western gardens. Raised from the seeds of *Prunus subhirtella*, which are produced in large quantities every year, it grows here rapidly and proves to be a handsome tree. It has the drooping flowers of the well-known *Prunus pendula* of gardens which is only a seedling form of *P. subhirtella ascendens* and for which the correct name is *Prunus subhirtella* variety *pendula*. This tree is not known to grow wild, but has for centuries decorated courtyards and temple grounds in central and northern Japan. The largest tree seen by Wilson was sixty-five feet tall with a head as broad as the height of the tree. There is a form of *P. subhirtella* (var. *autumnalis*) with semidouble flowers which blooms in both spring and autumn. This is a shrub often cultivated in Tokyo gardens, and in the Arboretum first flowered in May, 1915.

**Prunus yedoensis.** This is the Cherry-tree which has been most generally planted in Tokyo. It is a small tree with smooth pale gray bark, wide-spreading branches, and large pale pink or white flowers which usually open before the leaves unfold. No old trees are known in Japan, and the origin of this Cherry is uncertain. It has not been found growing wild in Japan, and Wilson after studying it in Tokyo was inclined to believe that it was a hybrid. But, whatever its origin, it is a hardy tree which produces beautiful flowers and should be better known in this country and in Europe. Last year the flower-buds were killed by the winter cold; now the Arboretum tree is covered with them.

**Prunus serrulata, var. sachalinensis.** This tree, which was called *Prunus Sargentii* until it was discovered that it had an older name, is believed to be the handsomest of the large Cherry-trees of eastern Asia. In the forests of northern Japan and Saghalin it is a tree often seventy-five feet high, with a trunk four feet in diameter; it has large pale pink or rose-colored single flowers, large dark green leaves which are deep bronze color as they unfold with the opening flower-buds, and small globose fruits which are bright red at first when fully grown and become black and lustrous when ripe. In western countries this tree was first raised in the Arboretum in 1890 from seeds sent here by Dr. William Sturgis Bigelow, of Boston, and of the trees introduced by the Arboretum there is none of greater beauty. It has been found that the seedlings of this tree are the best stock on which to graft most of the double-flowered Cherries which are so highly prized by Japanese gardeners, and that the reason why these plants have

never been successfully grown in the United States or Europe is due to the fact that Japanese gardeners do not use a suitable stock for them. Some seventy-five named varieties of these Cherries with double or otherwise abnormal flowers, cultivated in Japan, are now in the Arboretum where they are being propagated. Among them are fifteen named varieties of the Sargent Cherry, and among these are some of the most beautiful of all flowering trees hardy in this climate and evidently destined, although still little known, to become important features in American gardens. Two of the handsomest of these double-flowered varieties of the Sargent Cherry are the forms *albo-rosea* and *Fugenzo*; the former has large rose-colored flowers changing to white as they open, and the other rose-pink flowers; this is well known in English gardens under the name of *James H. Veitch*. These two Cherries differ from the other Japanese double-flowered forms in the presence of two leafy carpels in the centre of the flowers.

European and North American Cherries bloom a few days later than those from eastern Asia, and can be seen near them on the right-hand side of the Forest Hills Road from that entrance to beyond its junction with the Meadow Road.

**Shad Bushes.** The Arboretum will be gay with the white flowers of these plants soon after this Bulletin reaches its Boston readers. Shad Bushes have been largely used in the plantations along many of the drives, and the general collection of all species is in the border between the Meadow Road and the parallel walk on the left-hand side entering from the Jamaica Plain gateway. Two of the species are native plants in the Arboretum, *Amelanchier laevis* and *A. oblongifolia*. The first is a tree of considerable size, and an inhabitant of rich upland woods and dry banks. *A. oblongifolia* is a large shrub rather than a tree, although tree-like specimens sometimes occur. It is easily distinguished from *A. laevis* by the silver color of the young leaves which at this season of the year are thickly covered with silky hairs. The earliest of all these plants to flower, *A. canadensis*, is a tree sometimes growing to a height of fifty feet and from *A. laevis* easily distinguished by the covering of pale hairs on the lower surface of the leaves. This handsome tree is distributed from western New York to Louisiana and is the common Amelanchier of the southern states.

---

An illustrated guide to the Arboretum containing a map showing the position of the different groups of plants has been published. It will be found useful to persons unfamiliar with the Arboretum. Copies of this guide can be obtained at the Administration Building in the Arboretum, from the Secretary of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, 300 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, from The Houghton, Mifflin Company, 4 Park Street, Boston, and at the office of the Harvard Alumni Bulletin, 18 Plympton Street, Cambridge. Price, 30 cents.